

speaking for up to 5 minutes each, with the following exceptions: Senator BYRD for the first 10 minutes, to be followed by Senator MURKOWSKI or his designee for 60 minutes, to be followed by Senator DURBIN or his designee for 50 minutes.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. BROWNBACK. If an agreement regarding the crop insurance legislation can be made, it is expected that the Senate will begin its consideration as early as tomorrow afternoon. If no agreement can be made, the Senate may turn to any Legislative or Executive Calendar items available for action.

ORDER FOR ADJOURNMENT

Mr. BROWNBACK. Mr. President, if there is no further business to come before the Senate, I now ask unanimous consent that the Senate stand in adjournment under the previous order following the remarks of Senator LAUTENBERG.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. LAUTENBERG. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the 5-minute rule presently in place for morning business be extended for me to complete my remarks.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

GUN CONTROL LEGISLATION

Mr. LAUTENBERG. Mr. President, I rise now in strong support of a resolution offered by my colleague, Senator JACK REED of Rhode Island. At the same time, I commend him for all of his hard work in support of gun safety measures.

We are soon approaching an anniversary. Most anniversaries have a happy ring to them—wedding anniversaries, birthdays are often called an anniversary. Those are pleasant moments. But the anniversary we are talking about now is one we will remember for decades to come. It is the anniversary of a mammoth American tragedy.

It is only 31 days until April 20, 2000, the 1-year anniversary of the terrible tragedy at Columbine High School in Colorado. We all remember that awful day almost a year ago. Across the Nation, people saw and heard the shocking news reports. Two students had stormed into their school and systematically shot and killed 12 classmates and a teacher. They also wounded 23 other students and teachers.

It makes me shudder when I recall the bloody carnage of that day. I had to shake my head in disbelief that this outrage could be committed in a school. No parent and no grandparent could avoid thanking goodness for the safety of their own families when they saw the horrors of those moments.

Those innocent, young people, full of life, running, scared, desperate, trying to get away from the gunmen—the image of the young man hanging out of the window trying to reach safety.

We thought that incident, that tragedy, would finally wake up Congress. That Congress would say: Let's end this; let's do what we can to stop this. And here, almost a year later, since that tragic moment, the American people have an obligation and a right to ask: What has Congress done to prevent another tragedy? How has Congress answered the cries and pleading of parents and grandparents who want to protect their children? What has Congress done to protect other families from gun violence? I ask the question and I will give the answer: Absolutely nothing. And it is a disgrace.

I and some of my colleagues have tried. During the debate on the juvenile justice bill, the Senate passed several gun safety measures, including my amendment to require criminal background checks at gun shows. It was a very close vote, a 50–50 tie. The Vice President, in his role as President of the Senate, came in to break the tie. And with that vote the Senate passed my measure to require background checks at gun shows. But still Congress has not completed action on that legislation, despite the support of organizations that we all know and agree with when it comes to law enforcement, groups endorsing the Senate-passed gun safety amendments, such as the International Association of Chiefs of Police, the International Brotherhood of Police Officers, Police Executive Research Forum, Police Foundation, Major Cities Chiefs, Federal Law Enforcement Officers Association, and others. They all ask why we can't do something about controlling gun violence in our society.

We tried. I remind my colleagues that the gun show loophole amendment had bipartisan support. I was pleased to have that support from our friends on the other side of the aisle, people such as Senators DEWINE, FITZGERALD, LUGAR, VOINOVICH, WARNER, and Chafee, who is no longer with us. They all voted for my amendment.

And the juvenile justice bill, with the gun safety amendments, passed by a vote of 73–25. So there was strong, bipartisan support for moving forward on juvenile crime and trying to reduce gun violence. But that was back on May 20 of last year, 10 months ago. We have to look at what has happened since then.

The shootings haven't stopped. Most recently, there was a 6-year-old shot by a classmate in Michigan. There was another shooting spree near Pittsburgh, where five people were shot and three died when a gunman opened fire on a McDonald's and a Burger King.

There have been more shootings, from Fort Gibson, OK, to Los Angeles,

CA, where a gunman opened fire at a daycare center. We all remember the little children being led from a day school—holding a policeman's hands. They were being led away from someone who would later kill a postal worker because he had a different complexion than the killer. And there was also Fort Worth, TX, where young people at a prayer meeting were assaulted by a gunman. It has been one shooting after another. And these tragedies demonstrate that unless all communities are safe from gun violence, no community is safe from gun violence.

But while the vast majority of Americans want Congress to act, there is one special interest that says, no, the status quo is more than enough. The National Rifle Association has worked with its allies in this body and in the House of Representatives to block legislation every time it comes up. The same old reaction. Every time Congress wants to pass gun safety laws, the NRA calls on its friends to prevent progress.

Recent statements from the NRA show how desperate and extremist they have become. A man named Wayne LaPierre, the NRA executive vice president, attacked President Bill Clinton. He said that President Clinton was "willing to accept a certain level of killing to further his political agenda." That comment is outrageous, insulting, reckless, and irresponsible. But Mr. LaPierre didn't stop there. He also accused President Clinton of having "blood on his hands" because of the shooting of the basketball coach, Ricky Byrdsong. Just when you thought the NRA could not go any lower, they managed to do it.

The NRA is so wrong because, in that case, it was the State authorities who failed to pursue and prosecute Ricky Byrdsong's killer when he failed the background check. These painful comments are an outrage, and Mr. LaPierre and the whole organization, the NRA, ought to apologize to Mrs. Byrdsong.

The NRA is out of touch with the American people. Look at the polls. There is overwhelming support for common sense gun safety measures. The American people are pleading with Congress to reduce gun violence. And they want to close the gun show loophole that permits unidentified buyers from getting guns without a background check. If you have money in your pocket, you can walk out with a gun at your waist. You could be one of the 10 most wanted criminals in all America, or one of the terrorists from abroad whose names have become legendary, and you could buy guns at these gun shows from unlicensed dealers—no questions asked. Who are you? What is your name? Where do you live? Have you had a bad record? No, not one question is asked.

But the NRA attacks are nothing new. They constantly spout careless

rhetoric. Some of my colleagues, and many other people, will remember when the NRA went after Federal law enforcement officials, calling them "jack-booted thugs." That comment resulted in President Bush's resignation from the NRA.

Now we have heard—I listened to it myself on a recent TV broadcast—Charlton Heston, who ought to know better, defending the reckless attacks on President Clinton. And on the NRA web site you even see more rhetoric about the Holocaust that took 6 million people to their death. It says that if the Jews had their weapons with them, it would not have happened. What an outrageous and insulting thing to say. Six million Jews were put in gas chambers, put in trains, and systematically killed. The entire Nazi government and communities across Europe—scientists, doctors, and teachers, all organized to put these people and 8 million more to their death. The NRA drops a casual remark like that and says maybe if they were allowed to carry weapons, or if they didn't have them taken away from them, they could have saved themselves. They are talking about kids who were 6 years old and babies who were thrown from trucks. They could have prevented it if they only had a chance to continue owning weapons.

While that rhetoric is the most outrageous, there is more phony rhetoric coming from the NRA. The NRA says that all we need to do is enforce the laws we have on the books. Another outrageous, loose statement. The argument ignores the fact that the number of Federal firearms cases prosecuted by U.S. attorneys increased 25 percent, from 4,754 in 1992 to 5,500 in 1999.

So the NRA's suggestion that law enforcement is not fighting gun crimes is just false rhetoric. They will say anything they want to if they feel it can help make their case. But they are not convincing the American people that everybody who wants to have a gun should get it in minutes. They say that 24 hours is more than enough time. But the FBI is trying to track down people who escaped the requirement for a thorough background check because there wasn't enough time to get it done. During the first year of the National Instant Criminal Background Check System, there were 3,849 occasions where three business days went by and the gun transfer had to be allowed, but the FBI later received information that the transfer was to a prohibited person. In other words, even three business days is not long enough.

And the NRA rhetoric also completely misses the point when it comes to gun shows. The problem with gun shows is there is no law to enforce. There is one giant loophole.

As I said earlier, someone on the FBI's Ten Most Wanted list can go to a gun show and buy a firearm from a

nonlicensed dealer with no questions asked. The only questions are: How many guns do you want and do you have the money? That is the transaction. It is as simple as that—hand-guns, assault weapons, you name it; all kinds. This isn't an enforcement issue. There is no background check requirement to enforce.

The NRA and its friends are out of touch with the American people. Even a major gun manufacturer, Smith & Wesson, said we need to do more on gun safety. The company reached an agreement with the Administration that will incorporate many of the measures stalled in the conference committee on juvenile justice—background checks at gun shows, child safety locks, and preventing the use of ammunition clips with more than ten rounds.

For the benefit of those who do not work around here, a conference committee is comprised of a committee of the Senate and a committee of the House, both with jurisdiction over particular issues. They sit down and hammer out differences in legislation. The conference committee on the juvenile justice bill has met just once, in August of last year. It has done nothing for months because the NRA and its friends—some of them here and some of them across the Capitol in the House—don't want any gun safety measures to pass Congress.

Despite that, the American people are demanding something be done. We have to move this conference. We want background checks at gun shows. We want child safety locks. We want to prevent the use of ammunition clips with more than 10 rounds. It is ridiculous that Congress is behind gun manufacturers on gun safety.

We want to stop the phony rhetoric and get on with the job. And the American people should remind their Senators and their Congresspeople that they are demanding safety from guns for their children, their households, and their families.

I hope the word goes out across this country that there is time now to start making changes to reduce gun violence. We ought to get on with the job. We have to stop the verbal attacks on law enforcement. We have to stop the excuses. The conference committee should complete its job. The American people should demand nothing less.

I support Senator REED's resolution and I hope many of my colleagues will vote for it. And we must show the American people that we have the backbone and the spine in this body to stand up to the NRA and campaign contributions from its political action committee.

Listen to the voices of the American people. Listen to the cries of anguished parents who run to the schoolhouse hoping their child was not one of those who are listed as dead or wounded. Lis-

ten to the mothers who will march to Washington on Mother's Day—there may be a million rallying across the country—and say: for God's sake, please help me protect my child from violence. There is no more important or urgent plea than that. It must get through these walls. The American people can't understand Congress' failure to pass gun safety measures. I can't understand it and I work here every day.

We must complete action on gun safety before April 20, 2000, the one year anniversary of the tragedy at Columbine High school. We cannot allow a year to pass with nothing done except people visiting cemeteries to see where their children are buried.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. DORGAN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

THE FEDERAL RESERVE

Mr. DORGAN. Mr. President, I understand the Senate is about to adjourn for the day. I was not going to come to the floor. Then I thought I would not sleep much tonight if I didn't come to the floor and say what I think ought to be said about the Federal Reserve Board. Again, today in secret downtown they increased interest rates for the fifth time in a relatively short period of time.

Will Rogers once said—and it is probably good to quote him in this room, where we used to have spittoons all across the Senate, I understand, well before I came here—"When there is no place left to spit, you either have to swallow your tobacco juice or you have to change with the times."

That is something the Federal Reserve Board would not understand.

The fact is, they met today again in secret behind closed doors, as they always do, because it is the last dinosaur left in this town. Everything else is relatively open. But the Federal Reserve Board meets in secret. They decided to do so again today. They decided to increase interest rates once again.

The last five interest rate increases, including this one today, mean that every family in America, on average, will pay an additional \$440 in interest charges this year. That is a tax on every American family. That was imposed on the shoulders of every American family, with no debate and no discussion. It was done in secret by the bankers down at the Federal Reserve Board.

Just because I feel so kindly about the role they played, I figured I should